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# The Manchester Museum

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MUSEUM HANDBOOKS

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## The Stela of Sebek-khu

THE EARLIEST RECORD OF AN  
EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN IN ASIA

By T. ERIC PEET, B.A.

Lecturer in Egyptology at the University of Manchester.



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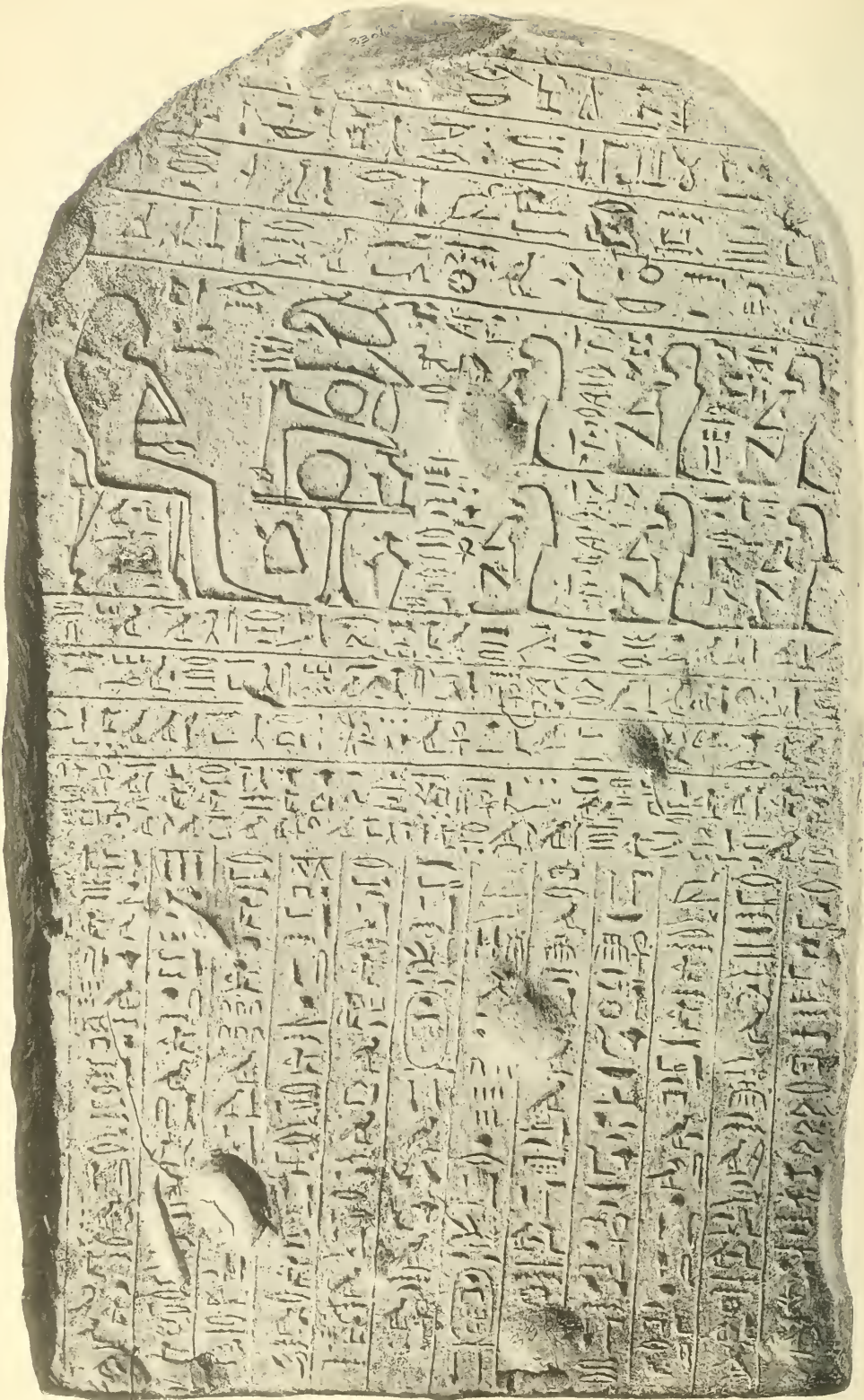
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## DESCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION.

IN the stela of Sebek-khu<sup>\*</sup> the Manchester Museum possesses one of the most important historical documents ever found in Egypt. It was unearthed at Abydos in 1901 by Professor Garstang, working for the Egyptian Research Account.<sup>(1)</sup> It lay apparently over or near the tomb E 11, which is in the central section of the great north cemetery, not far from its southern edge.

The stela is of limestone of very mediocre quality, and measures 280 by 165 mm. ( $16\frac{1}{2}$  by 10 inches). The inscriptions and representations are somewhat carelessly incised.

A good photograph is reproduced on Pl. IV of Garstang's *El Arabah*, and on Pl. V is a copy of the inscriptions and scenes, which does not, however, give the actual forms of the signs. In Chapter V there is an admirable translation by Newberry and a discussion of several of the points raised by the text. The text here published on Plate II is based on collations of the original which I made in the Manchester Museum in January, 1914. The signs used are merely conventional in form, except in the case of those whose reading is doubtful which are given in exact facsimile. Suggestions for filling the lacunæ are given below the text.

(1) *El Arabah*, p. 6, Pl. IV and V.

\* Another stela of Sebek-khu

B. M. 247 (1213) H. Tunc III. 12.

In the lunette at the top of the stela are four horizontal lines of inscription, reading as follows (see the plate):—

“An offering which the king gives to Osiris, Lord of Abydos, [that he may give offerings of bread and] beer, flesh and fowl, cloth and thread, incense and ointment, and all things good and pure, to the *ka* of the hereditary prince and count, who said that which was good, who repeated that which was desired in the course of every day, the great *uirtu*-official of the City, Sebek-khu, whose ‘good name’ is Zaa, child of Ita.”

Below the lunette is a scene representing the deceased Sebek-khu seated on a throne before an offering table plentifully provided with food and drink. The signs in front of his face belong to the end of the line above them, from which they were crowded out through lack of space. Beneath the throne are the words: “The *uirtu*-official - - - - possessing honour.” On the opposite side of the offering table are six figures arranged in two rows of three each. Their names are as follows:—“His daughter, his beloved, Sabu, child of - - - -. His brother Didiu, child of Mert-itfes. Overseer of the Cabinet, I—(?), child of Shayet (?). The nurse of his heart, Renf-ankh, child of - - - -. Iubu, child of Mert-itfes. Nebt-int, child of Iubu.”

Under the scene begins the historical inscription, which occupies the whole of the lower half of the stela. It is arranged in five horizontal lines (numbered 1-5), and below these twelve vertical lines (6-17). The translation is as follows:—

(1) “His majesty went down the river to overthrow the Mentu of Setet. His majesty arrived at a region whose name is Sekmem. (2) His majesty made a prosperous beginning of returning to the Residence of Life, Prosperity and Health. Then Sekmem fell (upon him?) together with the vile land of Retenu, (3) while I was acting as rear-guard. Then the soldiers of the army came to close quarters to fight with the Asiatics (*Amu*). (4) I smote



an Asiatic, and caused his arms to be taken by two soldiers of the army, without ceasing from combat; my face pressed on, and I did not turn my back before an Asiatic. As Senusret lives, (5) I have spoken truly. Then he gave me a staff of electrum into my hand, and a bow and dagger worked with electrum and - - - - .

(6) "The hereditary prince, firm of sandal, content of step, pressing close the path of him who makes him perfect, (7) to whom the Lord of the Two Lands has given his might, whose station his love advanced, the great *uartu*-official of the City, Zaa, (8) says: I have made for myself this tomb, it being made glorious and its position established at the staircase(?) of (9) the Great God, the Lord of Life, who is at the head of Abydos, in the region 'Mistress of Offerings' and in the region 'Mistress of Life.' I have smelt the incense (10) that comes forth and I am [equipped] with the divine aroma(?); the great *uartu* of the City, [Zaa]. (11) He says: I was born in year 27 under the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nubkaura (Amenemhat II), justified. (12) When the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakaura (Senusret III) arose in the double crown on the Horus-throne of the living, (13) his majesty caused me to adopt the profession of warrior of the guard(?) by the side of his majesty among seven men of (14) the Residence. Behold, I was skilful(?) at his side, and his majesty caused me to be made an 'Attendant of the Ruler,' and (15) there were given to me sixty men. When his majesty went upstream to overthrow the (16) Inu of Ta-sety, I captured a negro - - - - nkef, near my(!) city. (17) Then I came downstream in attendance among six men of the Residence. Then he made me inspector of the attendants, and there were given to me 100 men as a reward."

## NOTES ON THE TEXT.

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### The Lunette.

The text is straightforward. The remains of the word *ꜥꜣꜣw* (Abydos) are quite clear at the end of the top line. The second sign in the second line is not the vertical stroke (*El Arabah*) but the bird's head. For the determinative with *D*;; cf. Cairo Middle Kingdom stela 20375, where it accompanies *D*ꜣ.<sup>(1)</sup>

### The Names of the Figures.

There can be no possible doubt about the name of Sebek-khu's parent. It is *itꜣ* (Ita). Tofteen, in his *Researches in Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. 2, "*The Historic Exodus*" (Chicago, 1909) pp. 237 ff., attempts to read the signs as *ꜣꜣꜣ* (Iapeq), which occurs on a scarab of one of the Hyksos kings, apparently as a variant of *ꜣꜣꜣ*, an Egyptianised form of the Hebrew Jacob.<sup>(2)</sup> Tofteen would identify this Jacob with the patriarch of scripture, and his son, Sebek-khu, he considers to be Joseph. This identification is impossible for three reasons; firstly, the two signs in question, though badly cut, are certainly not *ꜣ* and *ꜣ*; secondly, they are followed by the determinative of bread, which makes it clear that they are *ꜣ*<sup>(3)</sup> and *ꜣ*, which is exactly what

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(1) For the name *D*;; cf. *British Museum, Hieroglyphic Texts from Stela*. II. 6, and Cairo M.K. stela 20586.

(2) Newberry, *Scarabs*, Pl. XXIII, 1. Cf. also 13 and 14, which bear the name of a prince *ꜣꜣꜣ*.

(3) The first sign is a perfectly made *ꜣ*.

they look like; and thirdly, on the Semneh inscription (see Pl. II, bottom) the reading *it*, is beyond question, and the feminine *mꜥt* shows that Ita is the mother not the father of Sebek-khu.

The name of the parent of Sabu has been unintentionally erased.

For the name of the parent of the nurse Newberry reads *Ddi*, which may be right, though the two first signs are little more than rough horizontal strokes.

The words beneath the chair are a puzzle. We expect the name of the deceased, "the *wꜥrtw* Sebek-khu, lord of honour," but instead of this we have "the *wꜥrtw* Tepfer (or Tefpet or Tefnut?) lady (!) of honour."

For the various *nartu*-officials, who are frequently mentioned but of whom not very much is known, see *Recueil des Travaux*, 1905, pp. 41 ff. In the title *nartu* of the City it is probable that the word *nwt* or city refers to the town of Thebes. On this point see a curious phrase in the Cairo M.K. stela 20378.

## The Historical Inscription.

*Line 1.*—The chief question is to determine the actual order of events. The first line is clear; the King sailed down the Nile to overthrow the Mentu of Setet and arrived at a place called Sekmem. But in *Line 2* the difficulties begin. The King makes “a good beginning<sup>(1)</sup> of going (*i.e.*, returning) to the royal palace.” Then follow the words *‘hēn Skmm hrš hr Rtnw hst*; these ought to contain a temporal sentence, “When Sekmem had fallen, with the vile land of Retenu.” This makes excellent sense. But, unfortunately, there is no authority for this, for *‘hēn* invariably introduces a principal, not a subordinate clause. We must, therefore, place a stop after the words “palace of life, prosperity and health,” and suppose that the following sentences all relate to events which happened during the return home.

But what are we now to make of the *‘hēn* clause. In the first place there is a difficulty about *hrš*, for since *hr* is an intransitive verb we need after *‘hēn* the pseudo-participle and not the *šdmf*-form, which would be wrong even were *hr* transitive, for *‘hēn* would then have to be followed by *šdmf* with its subject after it. It, therefore, seems probable that we ought to read *hrti* (pseudo-participle). We have still to decide on the meaning of *hr*. If it has its usual meaning of “to fall,” we must suppose that the King left the reduction of Sekmem and the Retenu until his return march, which fits but ill with the earlier words “his majesty arrived at a district called Sekmem.” It is thus just possible that *hr* here has the technical sense of to “fall upon” or “attack.”

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(1) For *tp nfr* cf. Weill, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Sinai*, Nos. 57 and 63, where, however, *tp* has hardly the literal meaning of “beginning” which it seems to have here.



*Line 2.*—The “Residence of Life, Prosperity and Health” is the usual expression for the King’s palace.

*Line 3.*—The sentence *iwi hr ir(t) ph* must be a temporal clause going with what precedes.

The *nhw* are apparently ordinary foot soldiers. They occur in the Decree of Horemheb (Breasted *Ancient Records* III, 51, 57, 59), and in the wild cattle hunt of Amenhotep III. (*op. cit.* II, 864). Cf. also Sethe, *Urkunden* IV, 911. In *Urk.* IV, 48, 3, they are distinguished from the *šmšw*, who doubtless served in the army as officers. Compare the phrase *nh n nwt* = citizen.

For *ph* used of the conflict of opposing armies cf. Piankhi, l. 21.

*Line 4.*—*nn tšt* is a good example of the absolute negative infinitive (Sethe *Verbum* II, 550). If the form here were correct *tš* would be a verb III. æ infirmæ. We should doubtless read *tš*. It is often followed by *r* in place of *hr* which we have here, e.g., Sethe *Urkunden* IV, 892.

For *dīt š; n* “to turn the back on” cf. Piankhi, l. 13.

*hri hs* must mean “my face drawing nigh (to the foe)” or in other words “face foremost” or “pressing onward.” Cf. Sethe *Urk.* IV, 85, 10 (His majesty strode thro’ the lands looking for foes) *n gmnf hstifi hr imf* “he found none who would stand against him.” The upper of the two horizontal strokes below *hs* is its complementary *s*; the second must be the negative *n*.

*nh Sntwšrt* is a common form of oath. Cf. Weill *Recueil des Inscr. du Sinaï*, No. 57, last line, *nhī ddnī m mft*; also Abbott, VI, 14.

*Line 5.*—*hēn dinf* is usually taken to refer to Senusret, perhaps rightly. It might also refer to the prisoner.

*ššs.* Newberry quotes Golenischeff, *Epigraphische Resultate*, Pl. XVI, l. 12.

*int.* Cf. Brugsch *Wörterbuch*. The usual form seems to be *inty*.

*mḳšw*. Newberry quotes Steindorff, *Grab des Mentuhetep*, Taf. V. It is perhaps the same word as *b;gšw* (Sinuhe, l. 129). We should perhaps read the *b*-bird instead of the *m* suggested in the notes on the plate.

*hn<sup>c</sup> ḥḫwḫf*. The usual reading here at the end of the line *ḥḫwḫf* can hardly be right. In the first place it does not quite fit the traces, and secondly, it seems clumsy to say "he gave me a staff and bow and dagger and his arms," whether "he" refers to the king or the captive. It therefore seems to me more probable that in these much worn signs we have a name of material coupled by *hn<sup>c</sup>* with *ḫm*, "a dagger inlaid with *ḫm* and . . . ."

*Line 6.*—The titles are all well known. For *mḏd w;ṯ n šmnh šw* cf. Weill, *Recueil des Inscr. du Sinai*, Nos. 25, 33 and 35. For *hr nmtwt* we more usually find *šhr nmtwt* "contenting the footsteps."

*Line 7.*—There is some error here. *rdln* is certainly relative form. Were it participle "giving his *f;w* to the Lord of the Two Lands," the order would be incorrect, for we should need *rdl f;wḫf n nb t;wḫl*. At the same time, even taking *rdln* as relative, the sentence is still imperfect, for there is a *nf* ("returning pronoun") needed after *rdln*. For *f;w* "might" (?) see Sethe *Urk.* IV, 56, 936. If *f;wḫf* could be a verb the sentence would be correct as it stands "Whom the Lord of Two Lands has caused to be mighty."<sup>(1)</sup>

*Line 8.*—*rwḏ*. The original meaning is "staircase," as is evident from the determinative. But is this the meaning in the well-known phrase which we have here, *rwḏ nṯr* "the divine *rwḏ*"? This place or building was certainly at Abydos, and it is usually taken to be the terraced cliffs which surround the site, and which, with their regularly stratified ridges, do look like a vast staircase. The god connected with the staircase would, in this period, be Osiris.

Gardiner,<sup>(2)</sup> however, argues that *rwḏ* from its original meaning of

(1) This may perhaps be the correct solution. Cf. the very similar *rdln nb-f nṯr wḫf*, Stela of Mentuhotep, son of Hapy. (*Proceedings Soc. Biblical Archaeol.* XVIII., p. 195 ff.)

(2) *Recueil des Travaux*, 34, 204.

the staircase (in a tomb) came to mean the shaft which replaced the staircase in the tombs of later days. Here he may be right, though in the passage (*Siut* I, 308) which he considers decisive, *rwḏ hrī* might surely mean a staircase or terrace leading up the hillside to the tomb.<sup>(1)</sup> Gardiner, therefore, takes *rwḏ nṯr* to mean "the tomb of Osiris," which we know was shown at Abydos. But if *rwḏ* only means shaft, this translation is perhaps rather too violent a use of the part for the whole.

*Lines 8-10.*—There are exactly parallel passages in two Middle Kingdom stelæ at Cairo (Nos. 20153 and 20497); the two regions are there called "Mistress of Offerings" and "Mistress of Meals."

In line 10, after *pr m hnt* we can, on the authority of these passages, restore *hmtw(i)* "I have been equipped" or "provided." The Cairo stelæ proceed "with the divine eye."

*Line 9.*—*wṛt* is a difficult word. It is clearly a division of land or district of some kind. In the inscription of Weni we read of a place called "the *wṛt* of Horus, Lord of Truth;" here the meaning is probably "district." In *Siut* III, 1, and *Bersheh* II, 21 c., the word refers to the portion of the desert where the tombs lie. It also occurs in the Kahun papyri (p. 21), where a southern and a northern *wṛt* are mentioned. Compare also Cairo M. K. stela 20378, and Gardiner's notes to *Sinuhe* 40 (*Rec. Trav.* 32, 216). Here the reference is to two portions of the Abydos necropolis.

*Line 11.*—*msīi m hnt-šp* 27. The form *msīi* is interesting. There can hardly be any doubt that in the lacuna below we must restore *m*, of which a possible trace remains. It would be usual to consider the form *msīi* as a passive in *w*, but as such it would in Middle Egyptian be an anomaly. In fact, Sethe (*Verbum* II, 473) remarks on the strangeness of this very form in another inscription (*Aeg. Zeit.*, 1881, p. 116). But probably what we have here is simply the very common but little recognised use of *ms* in its intransitive active sense of "to

(1) Griffith is inclined to favour this interpretation.

be born.”<sup>(1)</sup> For this use cf. *Siut*, Pl. XI, l. 1, Pyr 663-4, St. Petersburg, 1116 B recto, l. 29. The form used here is simply *šdmf*, and we have exact parallels in Weni, l. 10, and elsewhere.

*Line 12.*—The clause contained in this line is clearly temporal, and is to be connected with what follows.

*Line 13.*—*rdit hmf iri*. What is the form *rdit*, which occurs above (line 2) and below (line 14)? It might be a form of *šdmf* with a curious added *t*, such as we have in *iwt-f* (“he comes”) used in certain moods as alternative to *iw-f*. But to this there is no parallel. The alternative is to take it as *šdmf*-form, which appears to be used narratively in Sinuhe, B. 4, *rdit(i) wi imi-wti b,ti*, “I placed myself between two bushes.” Cf. also lines B. 15 and B. 23. Note that here in line 2 the form has nominal subject and object. It might conceivably be temporal here in both cases as perhaps in Sinuhe B. 15.

*iri k;t m h; m ht*. This is one of the most difficult passages in the inscription. *irt k;t* must be a phrase meaning “to do the work of” or “undertake the profession of.” *h; m ht* must also be technical. Note that *ht* is written with the branch followed by the *t* and the stroke, not the *h* and *t* as given in *El Arabah*, and *m ht* ought therefore to mean “with wood” or “with weapons (?)” and not “afterwards” or “behind.” We may, therefore, translate literally “His majesty caused me to do work as a fighter with arms.” If we suppose that *ht* ought to have been written with the *h* and the *t* we might perhaps render “as a warrior of the body guard.” Cf. the title “*imi-h* of the king,” e.g., Sethe, *Urk.* IV, 898. Cf. Piankhi, l. 15, for the conjunction of *h;* and *k;t*.

*m š'i 7 (?) n hnw*, literally “as” or “among 7 men of the Residence.” These words refer to an office of some kind, but it is not known elsewhere. Note that in line 17 we have *m (š'i) 6 n hnw*. Is it possible that in the last stroke of the 7 we ought to see the vase sign for *nw* badly made? The words would then mean “as sixth man of the Residence.” In later Egyptian *m š'i 7* could mean with 6 other men, cf. *Abbott*, IV, 15, *iwf m 3 rmt* “he being with 2 other men.”

(1) See *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, I, p. 209.



Line 14.—*h<sup>c</sup>n špdui*, perhaps for *špdui hr*=I was clever.

Line 15.—*wḏ; ḥmf*. The next words should obviously be restored *m ḥnty*.

Line 16.—*šḥni nḥšy*. The damaged signs which follow must give the name of the negro's country or the locality of the fight. The first sign is a bird (*m?*), the second almost certainly *k* or *nb*, the third *n*, the fourth *k*, and the fifth probably *f*. Read *m knkf* (??).

*r gš nwti*. It is a little unlikely that Sebek-khu's city should have been in Nubia. Perhaps we should read *nwt-f* "his city."

Line 17.—*h<sup>c</sup>n rdnf r*. We must insert *wi* (me) after *rdnf*. *fk*=reward, both as noun and verb. Cf. Sethe, *Urk.* IV, 891, 1055.

## The Career of Sebek-khu.

The career of Sebek-khu is thus as follows:—He was born in the 27th year of King Amenemhat II, and seems to have started his military career immediately upon the accession of King Senusret III. At this period he would be about 27 years of age. His first office is merely that of a warrior of the guard (?), along with six others. He is then promoted to be a "Follower of the Ruler," and given command of sixty men. Then follows the Nubian campaign, after which Sebek-khu was made "Inspector of the Followers," and given command of a hundred men. Unfortunately we are not informed at what stage of his career the important expedition into Asia took place. That he was still active in the ninth year of Amenemhat III, when he must have been about 74 years of age, is clear from an inscription (see Pl. II, bottom) on the rocks at Semneh beside the Second Cataract, where he was engaged in taking records of the height of the Nile. He had by this time attained to the office of "*uartu* of the ruler's table(?)" Finally, upon his stela at Abydos he is described as "*uartu* of the City."

### Historical Value of the Stela.

The importance of the stela of Sebek-khu lies in the fact that it is the first record which we have of the carrying on of a war in Asia by the Pharaohs. From this moment dates our knowledge of that long series of successes and counter successes which led through the Hyksos invasion and the great wars of Thothmes III and Rameses II to the campaign of Sheshonk mentioned in the Old Testament, and which may be said to have ended with the overrunning of Egypt by the Moslems in the seventh century A.D.

Let us begin at the beginning and learn what we can of the earliest relations of Egypt to Asia. The origin of the dynastic race is still a matter of uncertainty, but it is beyond all doubt that the occurrence of Byblos in the old Osiris legends points to some very early connection between Egypt and Syria, though of what nature it is impossible to say. Under the Old Kingdom, Egypt seems to have troubled herself little about her Asiatic neighbours, though, if we possessed the history of the Delta during this period we might have to modify this assertion considerably. The biographies of the great nobles, Weni, Herkhuf, Sabni and others, are full of records of campaigns in the south among the Nubians and other peoples of that district, but they tell us nothing of Asia, and we may perhaps legitimately infer from this the absence of inimical relations, if not altogether of friendly ones. It is, however, in one of these inscriptions, that of Pepinekht, of the VIth Dynasty, that we find the first mention of the land of the Aamu. An officer of the Pharaoh had been occupied in building a ship of cedar wood for an expedition down

the Red Sea to Punt, when he was set upon by Aamu of the Heriu-sha, and slain with all his company.<sup>(1)</sup> This ship must, of course, have been building at some point on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea, doubtless at the end of one of the old caravan routes from the Nile valley, and we must therefore infer that part at least of this coast was included at this period under the title "Land of the Aamu." The Heriu-sha are the "Sand-dwellers," *i.e.*, the Bedawin, and we need not suppose that this early collision with the Aamu consisted of more than the punishment of a few nomadic tribes.<sup>(2)</sup>

Meantime, Egypt was gradually coming into contact with her nearer neighbours in Asia as a result of her expeditions to the turquoise mines of Sinai. In the earliest rock inscriptions of the Wadi Maghara in West Sinai, the king is usually represented as slaying a bearded enemy, and the scene is inscribed "The Smiting of the ———."

In the earliest inscription, that of Khufu,<sup>(3)</sup> in which the name of the enemy who is being smitten is mentioned, it is the Inu. Now the Inu are in all probability an original African tribe, and we can hardly argue from this inscription as to their presence in or absence from Sinai, for since the Egyptians had from early times a festival of "Smiting the Inu," the scene may have no local application whatsoever. King Sahura<sup>(4)</sup> of the Vth Dynasty is represented in his inscription here as "smiting the Mentu of all countries and subduing all lands." King Neusera<sup>(5)</sup> also inscribed a tablet with the same words, but the inscriptions of later kings are of a less warlike tenor. It is not impossible that the Mentu were the early inhabitants of the Sinai Peninsula, and that the

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(1) Sethe, *Urkunden*, I, 134.

(2) Cf. also the inscription of Weni.

(3) Weill, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Sinai*, No. 7.

(4) *Op. cit.* No. 8.

(5) *Op. cit.* No. 9.

Egyptians actually had to defeat them in order to secure for themselves the turquoise mines, and if this is the case, we have here the first conflicts of Egypt with the East.

Egypt, however, was destined ere long to make a more painful acquaintance with the peoples of Asia. Some time ago Gardiner had suggested that the period which separated the end of the VIth Dynasty from the beginning of the XIIth had witnessed serious incursions of Asiatic tribes into the delta, or at any rate into the eastern part of it. (Gardiner, *Admonitions*, pp. 111-112.) This has been completely confirmed by the publishing of the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B, which is a prophecy *post eventum* dealing with the very period of these invasions. Here the invaders are called Aamu, and the future building of the Prince's Wall, *inb ḥk*, to keep back the Aamu is foretold. Fortunately, this Prince's Wall is again referred to in the tale of Sinuhe, where it is stated to have been built to keep back the Setiu. All this evidence points clearly in one direction. In the dark period between the VIth and XIIth Dynasties the Delta had been ravaged by Asiatics, and it remained for King Amenemhat I, the first king of the XIIth Dynasty, to drive them out and to build a wall<sup>(1)</sup> to prevent their returning. The scenes in the XIth Dynasty temple at Dêr el Bahri representing battles between Egyptians and Asiatics perhaps refer to the earlier stages of this war of expulsion of the foreigners.

Such was the situation at the beginning of the XIIth Dynasty, and it is natural that the kings of this dynasty should have meditated reprisals. Hitherto, before the theory of an Asiatic invasion in the dark period had become fact, it was usually considered that the warlike operations of the kings of this dynasty were practically limited to the subjugation of Nubia and the

(1) See Sinuhe ll. 71-3, and Gardiner's conjecture regarding it (*Recueil des Travaux* XXXII, pp. 224-5.) If Gardiner is right Amenemhat I would be the "Imefhy" of the St. Petersburg papyrus.



south generally. It is in correcting this impression that the stela of Sebek-khu is of such paramount importance. It is a bright flash of light in the midst of the surrounding darkness, showing us an Egyptian king of this period engaged in a definite campaign in Asia, and we can hardly doubt that this was no isolated incident.

Can we gather anything as to the region in which the campaign took place or the position of the various peoples mentioned? The expedition is undertaken in order to overthrow the Mentu of Setet, one of whose districts is apparently Sekmem. Sekmem then allies itself with Retenu, and the allied army is referred to a little later in the inscription as the Aamu. There can hardly be any doubt that the Egyptians themselves were not altogether consistent in the use of the various names which they possessed for the peoples of Asia, and the use perhaps varied somewhat according to period. At the same time, it is possible to disentangle the confusion to some extent.

To begin with, Setet is clearly a place name, and stands for a portion of nearer Asia, if not for the whole of it as known to the Egyptians. The word seems originally to have denoted the region of the first cataract of the Nile, and according to Max Müller it was applied to Asia only by confusion with the word Setiu (spelt with the hide pierced with the arrow), which was in reality an entirely different word used for Asiatics in general, or perhaps more particularly for Asiatic Bedawin. This transference of the name to Asia is said by Max Müller to have taken place not earlier than the XVIIIth Dynasty; but here he must be wrong, for our text makes it clear that the Mentu, who were certainly Asiatics of some kind, could in the XIIth Dynasty be described as "of Setet."

The Mentu, whom Max Müller is probably wrong in separating from the Mentiu, the latter being nothing more than a later spelling, seem to have been an Asiatic people living very close to the borders of Egypt. We have already seen that they are

mentioned in the Old Kingdom inscriptions of the Wadi Maghara in Sinai as being smitten by various Egyptian monarchs, and though these scenes need hardly be taken as a proof of extensive warfare with these people in early times they afford a presumption that the Mentu formed the population, scanty no doubt, of Sinai or of the region which had to be traversed by the Egyptians in order to reach Sinai.

There is an instructive reference to the Mentu in a well known text of the early XVIIIth Dynasty, the biography of Iahmes, son of Ibana.<sup>(1)</sup> The third section of the inscription describes the expulsion of the Hyksos from the Delta and the sack of Avaris and of Sharahana. The opening words of the next section are: "Now after his majesty had slain the Mentiu of Setet he went south to Nubia." From this we may legitimately deduce the fact that the expelled Hyksos were, in part at least, regarded by the Egyptians as no other than the Mentu, or Mentiu, of Setet.

On the whole, it seems best to regard the Mentu as an Asiatic people living on the confines of Egypt, inhabiting Sinai and perhaps Southern Palestine. The expedition against the Mentu would then represent quite an early stage in the conquest of Asia by Egypt.

What, then, is the country called Retenu? It is mentioned very rarely in the texts of the Middle Kingdom. In the first place we have the reference on the stela of Sebek-khu, which tells us no more than that this land allied itself with the Mentu against Egypt. Secondly, the Prince of Retenu is mentioned in several of the Sinai inscriptions of Serabit el Khadem as having been taking part in the Egyptian turquoise mining expeditions.<sup>(2)</sup> I cannot, however, follow Weill in his conclusion that in these early times the name Retenu was applied to the Sinai Peninsula.

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(1) Sethe, *Urkunden*, IV, p. 5.

(2) Weill, *op. cit.*, No. 75, and certain unpublished inscriptions from Sinai.

The presence of this prince with the Egyptian expedition merely shows that he was on terms of friendship with Egypt, but does not in the least demonstrate that Sinai was part of his country. Thirdly, we have the references to Retenu in the Story of Sinuhe. Sinuhe in the course of his wanderings is received and cared for by the Prince of Upper Retenu. From the story itself we cannot draw any conclusion as to the whereabouts of the country of this prince, although it is clearly somewhere in Syria. We need hardly take quite seriously Sinuhe's statement<sup>(1)</sup> in his flattering address to the Egyptian king: "Retenu is thy property, like thy hounds."<sup>(2)</sup>

Such are the scanty Middle Kingdom references to Retenu. They tell us very little, except that Retenu was already divided into Upper and Lower, exactly as in the XVIIIth Dynasty.<sup>(3)</sup> We are perhaps safe in taking Retenu to refer here, as in later days, to the greater part of Syria and Palestine, especially the hill country.

The term Aam can hardly be other than a general term for an inhabitant of Asia. This is evident from its various uses. Thus Sinuhe, in speaking of his combat with the rival warrior of Retenu, says of the spectators, who it is clear consisted of Retenu, "Every Aam cried aloud."<sup>(4)</sup> Later in the story the king says to his wife concerning the returned Sinuhe:<sup>(5)</sup> "Behold Sinuhe comes as an Aam," referring to the Asiatic costume which the exile is wearing. The texts which deal with the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Asiatic invaders of the XVth to XVIIth Dynasties, usually describe them as Aamu, and the same term is used of the earlier invaders who came in after the VIth Dynasty. In the XVIIIth Dynasty, the word Aam is used regularly for an Asiatic slave, and Gardiner

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(1) *Sinuhe*, 222-3.

(2) See Gardiner's excellent notes on the passage (*Rec. Trav.*, 34, pp. 56-7).

(3) See Sethe, *Urk.* IV, 907.

(4) Cf. too Sethe, *Urk.* IV, 615, "The Aamu of Retenu."

(5) *Sinuhe*, ll. 264-5.

further points out that even in the XIth Dynasty it is applied to a particular class of servant in the temples, and that this use may perhaps mean that Asiatic prisoners were even at this date being captured and brought into the country as slaves.<sup>(1)</sup>

Setiu is also a rather general term, the exact denotation of which it is hard to fix. In the story of Sinuhe the Setiu are said to attack the hill tribes, among whom are clearly the men of Retenu, with whom Sinuhe was living.<sup>(2)</sup> It is, moreover, the Setiu who accompany Sinuhe on his return to the borders of Egypt,<sup>(3)</sup> and Sinuhe himself bears the title of administrator of the sovereign's domains in the land of the Setiu.<sup>(4)</sup> That there was some confusion between the Aamu and the Setiu is clear from the fact that in Sinuhe the Prince's Wall is said to have been built to keep back the Setiu, while in the St. Petersburg papyrus it is described as built to prevent the descent of the Aamu. In the passage Sinuhe, 264-5, "Behold Sinuhe comes as an Aam, whom Setiu created," (*i.e.*, child of Setiu parents), it is clear that Aamu includes Setiu, even if the two are not fully synonymous.

The meaning of the campaign related by Sebek-khu is therefore probably as follows. The Egyptians march into Asia to attack their near neighbours, the Mentu, who doubtless were among those Asiatics who had penetrated the Delta in the preceding period. The Mentu appeal to their northern neighbours, the people of Retenu, who are persuaded to join with them in the attack upon the Egyptian army. Thus it is clear that as early as the reign of Amenemhat III, if not earlier,<sup>(5)</sup> Egypt was conducting war in Asia, and that the defensive building of the Prince's Wall

(1) Gardiner, *Admonitions*, p. 112, note 4.

(2) *Sinuhe*, 97-99. The sentence is a little ambiguous. It might just be argued that Retenu is among the Setiu and not the hill tribes. But would Sinuhe use the uncomplimentary phrase *w; r štm* of his own friends in Retenu?

(3) *Sinuhe*, l. 245, but see previous note.

(4) *Sinuhe*, l. 1.

(5) Unfortunately Sebek-khu does not give the position in his career of the Asian campaign.



was followed by offensive measures in the same direction.<sup>(1)</sup> This military activity was, however, confined probably to Palestine and the regions bordering on the Egyptian frontier. Unfortunately we cannot place Sekmem, Max Müller's identification of it with Shechem being purely arbitrary. It is doubtless to be sought somewhere in Palestine, and though Retenu took part in the fight, we have no reason to suppose that the Egyptians penetrated far into that country. This view has perhaps some little support in the passage of Sinuhe where the exile tries to persuade the Prince of Retenu to make overtures to the new king of Egypt. He says: "He (the King of Egypt) is a widener of boundaries; he will seize the south lands, and will he not meditate on the north lands. . . . Send to him, let him know thy name." Here we seem still to be outside the sphere of direct Egyptian influence.

At the same time, that Egypt had already some footing in Asia is perhaps to be inferred from a stela of a certain Ptahur, dated in the 45th year of Amenemhat III and found in the Serabit el Khâdim in Sinai. Ptahur describes himself as "Controlling many in strange (?) lands, clever in reporting to his lord, ———ing Setet for him who is in the palace."<sup>(2)</sup> Here we seem to have a reference to some office actually held in Asia, or some service done there for the Pharaoh. With this we may compare Sinuhe's title already referred to, "administrator of the domains of the sovereign in the land of the Setiu," which, however, need hardly have been much more than a frontier post. In any case, the stela of Sebek-khu remains our best and most trustworthy authority for Egyptian conquest in Asia previous to the XVIIIth Dynasty.

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(1) See the difficult passage *Sinuhe*, ll. 71-73, and Gardiner's notes.

(2) Weill, *op. cit.*, No. 58. The Mentu are not mentioned in this inscription. Weill has misread the sign for *dr* (a boundary) as *mn*.

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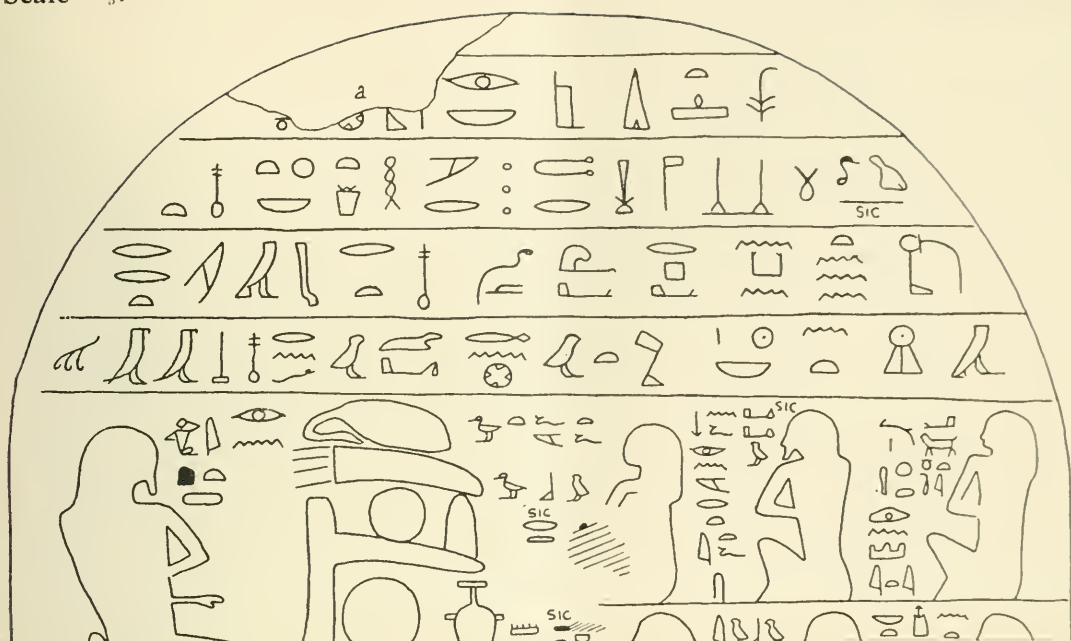
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This stela IX. p. 3.

Scale  $\times \frac{3}{5}$ .

PLATE II.







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